



2010 AWARD Fellow Salome Mumba

Position:	Senior irrigation water management specialist
Institution:	Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development
Country:	Malawi
MSc:	Water Management (Advanced Irrigation) Cranfield University, U.K., 2006
Mentored by:	Yakosa Tegha, Extension methodology officer Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Malawi

Research area: Improving surface irrigation systems for enhanced crop production in Malawi.

Salome Mumba is committed to improving surface irrigation systems in Malawi, where 83 percent of the population is involved in farming. Despite the fact that a third of the land is covered by fresh water, and farming under irrigation offers one of the most effective methods of increasing crop production, it is not commonly practiced in the country. Most farmers rely on rainfall, although there is no precipitation for nine months of the year. Mumba's ultimate goal is to contribute to improving household food security in Malawi.

The ambitious young woman was raised to believe that she could accomplish anything, and decided to pursue a BSc in Irrigation Engineering. She says Malawi has very few irrigation experts, with a ratio of only one per every 2,000 farmers. Mumba is currently involved in six projects to promote irrigation. "I am trying to change the mindset of farmers so they will accept irrigation as part of their culture," she says. "I've been organizing farmers into groups and training them on how to use river water for their crops."

Mumba says she enjoys working with the farmers, but she has to be careful. "They have a very unique language—their communication style is fascinating," she continues. "I have to watch how I walk, talk, and dress. If you make a mistake you can't apologize—and they will shut down."

Mumba is excited to be an AWARD Fellow and sees the program as complementary to Malawian government efforts to promote women. "In most communities in Malawi, women are regarded as inferior." She looks forward to improving her leadership skills and increasing her self-confidence. She participated in the project last year as a mentee to an AWARD Fellow, so she already appreciates the program. "I benefited from the mentoring I received. I have learned to be a better manager, and it inspired me to think big."

Mumba is one of 180 African woman scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD is a professional development program that strengthens the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science, empowering them to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. For more information, please visit www.awardfellowships.org